



## **News Release**

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### **Utah Public Health Receives \$15 Million for Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response**

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) has been awarded \$15 million in federal funding to further enhance public health's ability to prepare for and respond to acts of bioterrorism in Utah.

The UDOH and Utah's twelve local health departments submitted a grant proposal to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in June. On September 8, the UDOH received grant approval for \$10.9 million. Of these funds, more than \$4 million will be distributed to the local health departments based on population and need. This 2003-2004 grant is about \$1 million more than last year's funding. This additional funding is intended for laboratory preparedness, smallpox preparedness and plans for deployment of the Strategic National Stockpile in Utah.

In addition to the CDC funding, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has issued preliminary approval to the UDOH for a \$4.4 million dollar grant aimed at helping hospitals and clinics develop their response capacity by increasing education, equipment and supplies. This grant is \$3.3 million more than the previous year's grant funding and will be administered by the UDOH's Bureau of Emergency Medical Services while working closely with Utah's health care system.

Utahns are living in a time, post September 11th and various political conflicts, when the threat of biological and chemical weapons is increased. The response to the anthrax exposures on the east coast underscored the critical role public health agencies play in detecting and responding to these threats.

A strong public health system requires well-trained public health professionals who are equipped with the right tools and resources so that the system can respond to emergencies and detect and control disease outbreaks. With new grant money for 2003-2004, Utah is now able to enhance the ability of public health agencies to recognize and respond to natural or unintentionally caused disasters, outbreaks of diseases such as influenza and food poisoning, as well as intentional or terrorist acts involving biological or chemical agents.

#### **Utah's bioterrorism grant planning is categorized into focus areas:**

**Disease Monitoring and Control - \$1,314,216**

Utah's health departments are enhancing current systems to rapidly detect and investigate unusual illness patterns that may be the result of bioterrorism, outbreaks of infectious disease, and other public health threats and emergencies.

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**Testing for Chemical and Biologic Agents - \$1,551,170**

Work is underway to ensure that all state and major city/county public health laboratories have core diagnostic capabilities for biological and chemical agents. These funds enable Utah's Public Health Laboratory to develop the capability and capacity to conduct rapid and accurate testing for select biologic agents likely to be used in a terrorist attack.

**Communication Systems and Public Information - \$1,115,895**

All of Utah's health agencies are part of the Utah Notification and Information System that supports the exchange of key information and training by linking public health and private partners 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The system is replacing the Health Alert Network and has more capacity and features for levels of notification. In order to effectively communicate with the public and key stakeholders, Utah's public health agencies are developing a risk communication plan that provides timely information to citizens and the news media before, during and after a bioterrorist attack.

**Training, Planning and Assessment - \$5,644,437\***

(\*\$4,307,525 will be distributed to local health departments from this section for all focus area activities leaving \$1,336,912 in this area for the UDOH.)

Training, planning, coordination, and assessment are very important to be able to conduct response activities. Public health is assessing the training needs developing a statewide training plan for key public health professionals, infectious disease specialists, emergency department personnel and other healthcare providers to respond to a variety of threats.

**Hospital Capacity - \$4,448,125**

The HRSA grant will upgrade the preparedness of Utah's hospitals, first responders, EMS providers, and other collaborating health care systems. Decontamination units, training, supplies, etc., are being purchased to provide upgraded capacity at hospitals and clinics to treat multiple victims of a bioterrorism attack, especially children.

**Strategic National Stockpile - \$503,864**

The Strategic National Stockpile Program is also expanding in Utah. This program ensures that large quantities of life-saving medications and vaccines would be available and distributed quickly in emergency situations. These medications and supplies are held in secure locations around the country and can be requested by state health departments. Once they have arrived, a solid plan needs to be in place for information, distribution and security.

**Smallpox Preparedness - \$783,639**

Smallpox is one of the most infectious diseases and one that public health has defeated before. However, international threats keep prevention of smallpox on the public health's radar to be able to prevent or rapidly detect cases and intervene for limited spread.

**Grand total: \$15,361,346**

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